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DEPARTMENT FOR USAID/OFDA: ROB THAYER  
SIPDIS  
ALDAC

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: COLD FRONT AFFECTING CARIBBEAN COAST OF COSTA RICA AND  
PANAMA: DECLARATION OF DISASTER

¶1. As result of flood damage caused by the interaction of a high and low pressure systems on the Caribbean Coast of Costa Rica from November 22-26, 2008, the Chief of Mission has determined that the disaster is of sufficient magnitude to warrant US Government assistance. The damage has exceeded the effective capacity of the Costa Rican Government to respond, the Government of Costa Rica is willing to accept USG assistance, and it is in the best interest of the US Government to respond. The Chief of Mission is therefore exercising his Disaster Assistance Authority.

¶2. Serious flooding has occurred in the Atlantic Coast Region of Costa Rica as a result of non stop heavy rains. The low tropical depression caused flooding in the Provinces of Limon, Heredia and San Jose. The most affected areas of Limon are Siquirres, Pococi, Matina, Carrandi, Batan and in Talamanca: Sixaola, Bratsi, Cahuita. In Heredia: Heredia, Barva, Sarapiquí, and San Isidro. According to the latest report from the National Emergency Commission (CNE), 4890 people are living in 68 shelters as result of the floods caused by four continuous days of heavy rain. The CNE estimates that 1,200 houses have been affected. In addition, seven bridges, thirty two sections of roads, one potable water system, and three dikes have been affected. The Turrialba road is the only road open that connects San Jose with Limon. This road is being used for emergency purposes only.

¶3. The Ambassador's Authority of \$50,000 will be used to cover the costs of local transport and procurement of emergency supplies to the CNE. The CNE is requesting assistance from the Chief of Mission to provide air support to transport medical personnel and medical supplies to the affected area until the flood waters subside and more roads are open. In addition, the following relief supplies are being requested based on humanitarian gaps identified by the USAID/OFDA assessment team on the ground.

100 Boxes of Plastic Sheeting  
5,000 Hygiene Kits  
5,000 Blankets  
5,000 Water Containers  
12 Chain Saws

The relief assistance is likely to be channeled through the National Emergency commission and the Costa Rica Red Cross.

¶4. President Arias has declared the affected area a disaster zone as a direct result of the floods. CNE Director Mr. Daniel Gallardo, has expressed GOCR appreciation and willingness to accept assistance.

¶5. Additional funds and relief supplies may be requested based on humanitarian gaps identified by the USAID/OFDA assessment team on the ground. Relief assistance is likely to be channeled through the National Emergency Commission and the Costa Rica Red Cross.

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